Addressing the critical issues facing Asia
Across the globe millions of people are on the move, fleeing conflict, persecution, breakdown of institutions, or failures of governance. Millions of others live in rapidly transforming societies, battered by rapid urbanization, political instability, natural disasters, and violent extremism. The Asia Foundation is addressing these urgent issues every day, on the ground, and bringing together the people and resources to do it.
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The Asia Foundation has long been recognized for its ability to convene changemakers—individuals, organizations, and policymakers who are shaping Asia’s future—and to be the catalyst for creative solutions to the most critical challenges facing Asia. Leading up to the recent U.S. presidential election, the Foundation convened leading foreign policy experts from across Asia to share their input on the role the U.S. should play in maintaining regional security, supporting trade and economic growth, and addressing nontraditional security threats such as human trafficking, climate change, cyber-security, and natural disasters. Our resulting report—Asian Views on America’s Role in Asia—contains concise recommendations for policymakers, and was widely disseminated in Washington, New York, and throughout Asia. An overarching message is that sustained U.S. engagement and leadership is not only welcomed by most Asian countries, it is essential to advance U.S. interests in the region.

Across Asia the Foundation empowers rising development entrepreneurs to pursue needed reforms in their areas of expertise. In 2016, the third class of Asia Foundation Development Fellows—emerging leaders selected annually from more than 800 applicants—completed a rigorous professional advancement program designed and administered by the Foundation. By investing in these young Asian changemakers and their fields—as varied as law enforcement, women’s rights, and disaster management—we are investing in a more stable, peaceful, and inclusive Asia. By strengthening their leadership skills, and expanding their professional horizons, the Foundation is making a strategic bet on their ability to make an even greater contribution to their communities.
The Foundation welcomed two previous “graduates” of our fellowship programs as term trustees this year: Marcia Czarina Corazon del Mundo Medina-Guce, a 2014 Asia Foundation Development Fellow, who now leads initiatives in open data and open government in the Philippines; and Diana D. Won, a 2015-2016 Asia Foundation Luce Scholar in Seoul, Korea, who worked for Merry Year Social Company, a social innovation firm working across sectors to advise social impact portfolios for companies and partnering with government to train social entrepreneurs.

The Foundation’s ability to play a constructive role in Asia’s development depends heavily on the high caliber of our dedicated staff living and working in the 18 countries where we are based.

To prepare for the decades ahead, our staff carried out an intensive strategic planning exercise, TAF2020, to ensure the Foundation is equipped to effectively address the most urgent issues facing Asia. One of the important initiatives coming out of TAF2020 is the formation of Emerging Issues Teams (or EITs), nimble, time-bound, problem-focused teams from across the Foundation that emulate what successful tech firms in the Bay Area have pioneered for years, and draw upon an incubator-style structure that will keep us on the leading edge of change in the region. A major issue, rapid urbanization, and therefore urban governance, surfaced as the first priority to focus on. More than half of the world’s megacities are in Asia, including many on the list of 100 cities with the greatest exposure to natural disasters, but most of the big cities in Asia didn’t set out 20 years ago to have a population of 20-30 million people. They are the hubs of economic growth, and cities provide opportunities to participate in the growing global economy that simply aren’t there in remote, rural villages. But there is a whole set of issues related to urbanization, including effective city planning, environmental concerns, and disaster risk mitigation, as well as dealing with municipal finance and managing city budgets with citizen input.

The second issue to surface is the fate of Advanced Middle Income Countries. The places in Asia that have achieved advanced status began with Japan, followed by Korea, Singapore, and others. Malaysia, Thailand, and in just a few years’ time at current trajectories, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Philippines, and Mongolia will reach AMIC status, and with that rise comes enormous consequences. Most of the world’s poor are in middle-income countries, not in poor countries. The benefits of economic growth have not been evenly distributed, as evidenced by the widening gap between rich and poor across Asia. These top-tier rapid action EITs will focus solely on a critical issue and chart the way forward for the Foundation.

Clearly, our work is more important today than ever. Thank you for supporting The Asia Foundation.
AFGHANISTAN

The Asia Foundation supports Afghan citizens through programs and partnerships focused on improving rule of law, access to and quality of education, women’s rights and empowerment, regional cooperation, and security.

Building Foreign Affairs Capacity

Over the past decade, Afghanistan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs has increased its ability to manage relations with its neighbors and other countries. This includes strengthening the important role of the Ministry’s Regional Cooperation Directorate, with Foundation support. The Directorate represents the Afghan government in regional forums through the 14-member country “Heart of Asia” dialogue, and our efforts have bolstered the ability of the Directorate’s efforts to reduce tensions and improve relations in the area. Through the development of a research study on security cooperation, we worked with the Ministry to develop policy based on needs and trends. Finally, we supported more than 100 Afghan diplomats to develop English-language skills, an effort that took on special urgency after the president of Afghanistan issued a decree that diplomats must pass an English proficiency test to work abroad.

BANGLADESH

Our programs support women’s economic empowerment and policy dialogue on inclusive growth, with the aim of increasing the impact of economic prosperity on poverty reduction. We promote labor rights and access to legal services in the ready-made garments and tea sectors, and build civil society capacity to promote credible elections. We engage religious and secular leaders to advance national development efforts and women’s rights, and create a platform for wider discussions about the rapidly changing socio-political situation.

Increasing Youth Participation

Youth in Bangladesh comprise more than half the population and have significant potential to drive development and influence Bangladesh’s future. There is, however, a lack of understanding of the basic principles of democracy, which contributes to low participation of youth and poor civic consciousness. To address this need, we contributed to a robust youth network to develop leadership skills and engage them on issues and non-party based activities. This 750-member youth network is building a national movement toward a new and positive culture of civic consciousness and authentic participation. We also brought good governance principles into secondary schools and madrassahs and helped organize 10 youth social clubs.
Creating Access to Information

Despite the fact that 90% of Cambodia’s 700,000 garment and footwear workers are women, our research revealed little information is available about job opportunities for low skilled women in the labor market. We piloted a call center, Bong Srey, to assess demand for information about job opportunities and recruitment services in the garment industry, and data quickly indicated a high demand for such information. During the pilot’s six weeks, 800 calls were received from workers and numerous job openings were posted by 12 factories. We now partner with Cambodia’s largest job information portal to scale up the project into a stand-alone, socially responsible business.
Our work in China includes initiatives around development of the charitable sector, disaster management, empowering women, child protection, and constructive U.S.-China relations. With the rise of China’s global influence and impact on Asia regional development, the Foundation also continues to build on decades of programming and expertise to support Chinese international development efforts that are sustainable, informed by international practices, and responsive to local needs.

Protecting Vulnerable Populations

China’s government has strongly committed to combating domestic violence. We supported the first international conference to explore effective implementation of the country’s landmark Anti-Domestic Violence Law, with participation from over 130 representatives of key government ministries, international organizations, and more than 60 local civil society organizations and women’s federations from across China. In Nanjing, we helped foster a victim-centered assistance model, including training a taskforce of 24 social workers, psychological counselors, and pro bono lawyers, as well as another 164 local women’s federation staff, and rolling out public education campaigns which reached over 4,000 local community members. In the first nine months, the taskforce provided 123 counseling sessions and other assistance to 57 abused women. Another program focuses on children. We developed a toolkit for and trained 954 child welfare officers and personnel in Hunan, Shanxi, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces. Project experts mentored the trained child welfare officers to intervene in 33 child abuse cases within two months after the first round of trainings.
Addressing Water Challenges

South Asia’s major rivers—the Indus, Ganges, and Brahmaputra—are critical to economic growth, food and energy security, and sustainable development. However, due to population growth, industrial development, urbanization, ecological degradation, natural disasters, and climate change, these rivers are under considerable stress. To bring together people, ideas, and institutions in the region to collaboratively address these challenges, the Foundation is managing the Civil Society Fund of the South Asia Water Governance Program to support more than 40 civil society organizations in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Pakistan to collaborate, network, and engage with one another. Our objective is to support the sustainable, fair, inclusive, and climate resilient development of water resources and to improve the lives of communities affected by the governance and management of Himalayan Rivers.

Clean and Clear Mining

The environmental and social impact costs of the coal mining industry in Indonesia are significant. When a regional law established a deadline for the transfer of authority for mining and forestry from district to provincial governments, we seized a window of opportunity to support local partners in their advocacy for a comprehensive review of mining licenses. Mining permits were reviewed against “clean and clear” standards and mining operations were audited for legal adherence. As a result of our collective efforts, over 100 mining permits that did not meet standards for transparency and/or were in violation of environmental laws were revoked.
KOREA

Our office in Seoul works to strengthen the capacity of South Korean government agencies and NGOs, and facilitates regional cooperation in Northeast Asia.

LAOS

Our office in Vientiane encourages effective and responsive governance and legal systems; reductions in the negative impacts of development on the environment; expanding access to information and international engagement; and protecting women’s rights and well-being.

Strengthening Aid Effectiveness

Korea has continued to play an important role in the international development community by strengthening the effectiveness of its aid programs and enhancing the capacity of its development professionals. In support of these efforts, the Foundation, in partnership with the KDI School of Public Policy and Management, provides study visits for Korean mid-career development professionals to Myanmar to learn about development challenges the country faces in this critical time of transition.

National Assembly Training

The National Assembly is the representative of the multi-ethnic Lao people and the highest legislative body. While it is the channel for encouraging citizens to express their concerns and give feedback, the law-making process does not yet reflect the needs of its constituents. We support a brand-new research center within the National Assembly that provides research services to support parliamentarians to more effectively fulfill their policy-making and government oversight mandates. In the first year, the center successfully strengthened the ability of research staff who produced parliamentary briefing notes on land policy, special economic zones, and Laos’ progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals.
MALAYSIA

We work closely with our partners who are strengthening the business environment, providing opportunities for women and girls, improving security in vulnerable regions, bolstering Malaysia’s international development cooperation, enhancing the country’s electoral integrity and public accountability, and engaging young Malaysians on current issues.

Financial Literacy for Inclusive Growth

Globalization in recent decades has brought rapid growth to Asia, but many marginalized communities have yet to see significant gains. In Malaysia, we are working to ensure that young people from diverse backgrounds can participate in a growing economy. Our youth-targeted financial literacy program in Malaysia, using the Aflateen curriculum, targets at-risk communities including urban poor and the indigenous people of West Malaysia by exposing them to the concepts of saving, spending, and financial planning. We have already impacted more than 5,000 young people from 100 public schools in Malaysia; 100 Aflateen clubs were established to promote entrepreneurial skills. Participation has helped students develop practical financial literacy skills while tangibly improving their financial capability. This program has been so effective that it has received recognition and cooperation from the Malaysian Ministry of Education.

5,000 at-risk students from 100 public schools learned practical financial literacy skills
MONGOLIA

We help strengthen anti-corruption efforts; improve governance of cities and citizen engagement; increase gender equality; advance responsible resource use and environmental conservation; and support Mongolia’s multilateral foreign policy engagement.

Increasing Citizens’ Engagement

To increase democratic participation in Ulaanbaatar, we worked with Stanford University to support a first-ever “deliberative polling” exercise. More than 300 citizens convened in the capital city to prioritize, in real time, development projects in the city’s master plan. Deliberative polling has provided a critical platform for citizens to make meaningful contributions to their government’s decision making and has crossed party lines, an incredible achievement in the Mongolian political environment. The Mongolian government has now adopted deliberative polling as an important element of seeking input from the public, and the Foundation continues this cooperation with the government.

more than 300 citizens convened in the capital city to vote in real time on government priorities
Our work includes building the country’s capacity for regional and global integration; strengthening institutions and processes of democratic governance; contributing to informed dialogues on issues related to the peace process; supporting initiatives for inclusive economic development; promoting women’s empowerment and political participation; and increasing public access to information.

Improving Efficiency and Transparency

Myanmar’s state and regional governments are key institutions in the country’s nascent democratic transition. As the government units closest to the people, they are responsible for public financing of social services. The Foundation’s program focuses on strengthening government performance and accountability through briefings and trainings to state and regional officials on governance, budgets, and public financial management. We piloted a new mobile app that for the first time allows municipal staff to review and input data in real time, greatly improving efficiency and transparency. Myankhon provides complete information about individual households and businesses, and their taxes due; reduces the time needed to update tax records, generate tax bills, and record payments; and simplifies the process for tax collection. The application also features analytics that allow staff to monitor the performance of tax collectors and forecast revenues. These efforts build on the Foundation’s unique position in Myanmar, and its relationships of trust in the country’s new environment of democracy and reform.
NEPAL

The Asia Foundation supports Nepal’s efforts to strengthen subnational governance, manage conflict, promote women’s security, expand economic opportunity, and promote regional cooperation.

Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding

Nepal’s citizens face both a weak and inaccessible formal justice system and inadequate means of resolving local disputes. In this context, our community mediation (CM) program has helped by providing immediate, affordable, and locally accessible dispute resolution services. CM has also contributed in increasing social harmony, building peace, and improving local governance. Based on our decade-plus locally grounded experience, we were able to promptly implement CM and facilitated dialogue programs to address interpersonal and policy-level conflicts related to earthquake relief and recovery in seven earthquake-affected districts. Last year, we also provided technical support to the Nepali government’s Mediation Council to implement the Mediation Act and organized an international conference to create a shared vision of CM and broaden its application in a development context.

PAKISTAN

Our programs foster greater participation of all citizens, particularly vulnerable groups, to benefit from shared prosperity accruing from economic development. We work with local partners to strengthen the democratic and political process, promote inclusive participation, and build the capacity of local institutions to meet the needs and sustain the gains of economic and social development.

Safeguarding Religious Minorities

Although Pakistan has enacted laws to safeguard the rights of minority religious communities, their content and implementation leave gaping holes that urgently need to be addressed. Last year, we organized one-on-one meetings with journalists and civil society to discuss how balanced and sensitive reporting could benefit religious minorities. We also supported religious freedom caucuses in the National Assembly and the Provincial Assemblies of Punjab and Sindh to promote inter-faith harmony and highlight policy issues affecting minorities. Nearly 80 parliamentarians pushed for legislative reform and lobbied for seven bills to improve the treatment of minorities, promote greater tolerance, and prevent hate crimes. Four bills have since passed in the Sindh Assembly.
PHILIPPINES

Our programs in the Philippines promote policy reform, citizen participation, and better governance to support economic growth, strengthen the rule of law, encourage reform in the security sector, and foster peace and development in Mindanao.

Accessible Polling Places

The Foundation successfully built a multi-sectoral coalition that promotes the participation of people with disabilities (PWDs) in the democratic process. The 2016 Philippine national elections not only set a new record for voter turnout, it also marked the first time that Republic Act 10366 was fully implemented. This Act mandates that polling stations be fully accessible for PWDs. We worked with a coalition and members of the PWD sector to apply the existing law to increase voter registration and the number of accessible polling places. From only two polling places available to disabled voters in 2013, today there are more than 5,000 such polling places.

we helped increase the number of polling stations accessible to people with disabilities

from 2 to 5,000
SRI LANKA

The Asia Foundation is committed to sustaining peace and prosperity in Sri Lanka by strengthening institutions of governance, security, and justice. We are working to promote inclusive economic growth and development; to advance local democracy and access to justice; to help communities and individuals recover from trauma and violence; and to promote citizens’ participation.

Addressing Voters’ Priorities

Sri Lanka’s economic growth has accelerated since the end of the war, but investment, and employment are still concentrated around the country’s capital Colombo. Sri Lankan government, private sector, and civil society all acknowledge the need for lagging regions to catch up if future conflict is to be avoided. Although the end of the conflict ushered in opportunities for reviving economic growth, peace may be threatened if economic disparities are not addressed. To help these regions evolve as robust economic centers and identify and promote new business ideas at the local level, we facilitated a more participatory mechanism for citizen input on budget allocations to support these new projects. We then piloted an Online Budget Management tool that helped local governments prioritize the citizens’ priorities, and as a result, nine local governments were able to jumpstart practical revenue-generating projects citizens really wanted, including a large supermarket complex in Jaffna and a Pilgrim Resting Center in Katargama for travelers to the sacred city.
THAILAND

Since 1954, The Asia Foundation has been supporting Thailand’s development, including during key transitions. With growing concerns about trade, education, inequality, and the environment, the Royal Thai Government is moving forward on several major reform initiatives, integrating principles of self-sufficiency across government programs and new investments. The conflict in the southernmost provinces continues, with prospects for a peaceful settlement still elusive.

Laying the Groundwork for Peace

The Southern border provinces are facing a long-running separatist conflict and inter-communal tensions that have shattered a tradition of peaceful coexistence. The conflict has claimed more than 6,500 lives since 2004. The Foundation is working to address the drivers of the conflict, and support efforts to improve relations between the major ethnic groups living in the conflict-affected area. We are also helping to improve the quality of criminal investigations, and assist Government authorities who are committed to addressing local grievances. In 2016, we helped three forensic police units of the Police Forensic Science Center 10 in Yala province to attain ISO 17020 accreditation. We also supported a seminar for prosecutors, policy, and human rights lawyers to highlight the need to improve the quality of criminal justice procedures in compliance with international standards.
Diversifying Economy and Resources

Petroleum and agriculture have historically been the chief drivers of Timor-Leste’s economy, but oil is expected to run out by 2032. To aid in the diversification of Timor’s economy and resources, we are supporting a nascent but emerging tourism industry. In preparation, the Foundation convened donor, governmental, and private sector stakeholders to present early research analysis for the expansion of domestic and international air travel. Our research was presented to officials in the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, as well as the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs. In addition, we led the creation of a national tourism branding and marketing strategy, and the country’s first consumer tourism website, timorleste.tl. These activities have been instrumental in laying the groundwork for the country’s first tourism policy. Through an emphasis on an evidence-based approach, this new policy will guide the informed development of the tourism sector over the next five years.

Access to Banking

We launched a partnership with the Vietnam Bank for Social Policies and MasterCard to develop a mobile banking platform that gives low-income people better access to financial services. The project, which builds on a mobile banking feasibility study we commissioned in 2014, will be rolled-out to the bank’s 7 million account holders nationwide in stages over the next three-five years. The effort has been helped by MasterCard’s “branchless” platform that lowers the operational costs of banking. With support from the Australian Government, the platform will provide reliable, convenient, and flexible financial services to all the bank’s clients, including the many women-led small enterprises that are a specific focus of our efforts.
BOOKS FOR ASIA

We put brand-new books and digital content into the hands of students, educators, and leaders in 20 countries. Through technology initiatives and book donations, we help infuse students with a love of reading essential for literacy; build knowledge in the business, legal, and science professions; sharpen vocational and research ability; and enhance language skills to compete in the global economy.

Digital Libraries Expand Content

Last year, we convened nearly 20 publishers, editors, writers, and young technologists in Phnom Penh, for Cambodia’s first children’s e-book hackathon, part of our Let’s Read! initiative to use technology to stimulate reading. By the end of the day, participants had created engaging, original children’s content in electronic format, all in the Khmer language. Hackathons have the potential to invigorate children’s book creation in countries where few children’s books are published. Using a collaborative model in publishing lowers development and production costs and dramatically compresses the turnaround time. With support from a leading Cambodian telecom company, 2017 hackathons will incubate even more publishing talent and expand the quality and diversity of local children’s books.
Investing in Asia’s Future

The Asia Foundation Development Fellows: Emerging Leadership for Asia’s Future program provides highly-qualified young professionals from Asia with an unparalleled opportunity to strengthen their leadership skills and gain in-depth knowledge of Asia’s critical development challenges. The year-long professional advancement program draws on The Asia Foundation’s extensive 18-country network and deep expertise working with innovative leaders and communities across the region. The program is designed to be a multifaceted experience, involving intensive learning modules—short courses, conferences, and study tours in Asia and the U.S.—to enhance leadership skills, Asian development knowledge, professional networks, and international exposure.

EXCHANGES

We encourage greater understanding between Asians and Americans with the ultimate aim of contributing towards strengthened U.S.-Asia relations. Over more than six decades, Foundation grants have provided thousands of participants with opportunities to exchange views and gain direct experience with regions other than their own.
Lotus Circle Responds to Urgent Challenges

Our Lotus Circle, a community of individuals, foundations, and corporations who raise private capital to rapidly respond to challenges facing women in Asia, honored Afghanistan’s First Lady Rula Ghani and Carnegie Corporation President Dr. Vartan Gregorian at the sixth annual Lotus Leadership Awards Gala in New York City. Each year, leadership awards recognize outstanding individuals and organizations that have made major contributions to the well-being of women and girls in Asia. Proceeds from the gala go towards innovative programs for women and girls across the Asia-Pacific region.

Asian Views on America’s Role in Asia

Our signature foreign policy initiative, Asian Views on America’s Role in Asia, provided strategic recommendations for the new U.S. administration on foreign policy toward Asia. We presented insights from a series of closed-door, high-level meetings with Asian and American experts in the three sub-regions of Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia in a report and during forums in the U.S. and Asia.

“We need to give Afghan women the tools to succeed.”

—Afghanistan’s First Lady Rula Ghani

Maintain a robust, sustained, and consistent American presence in the Asia-Pacific.
## FINANCIALS

2016 FINANCIAL CONDENSED HIGHLIGHTS (in thousands)

### REVENUE, SUPPORT & INCOME

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<td>Government: Bilateral &amp; Multilateral Institutions</td>
<td>94,508</td>
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<td>Foundations, Corporations, &amp; Individuals</td>
<td>5,752</td>
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### EXPENDITURES

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<td>Programs, Grants, &amp; Related Services</td>
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<td>General Administration</td>
<td>11,022</td>
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<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>695</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>99,552</strong></td>
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Change in Net Assets from Operations: 708

Non-operating Income: 804

### BOOKS IN-KIND

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<td>Donated Books &amp; Related Materials</td>
<td>12,816</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distribution of Books &amp; Materials</td>
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<td>Inventory Increase</td>
<td>3,282</td>
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### ALLOCATION OF EXPENSES

- **Programs**: 88%
- **Administration**: 12%
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